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Clogging the System

Harrison Postler
University of Northern Iowa

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CLOGGING THE SYSTEM

A Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Designation

University Honors

Harrison Postler

University of Northern Iowa

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This Study by: Harrison Postler

Entitled: "Clogging the System"

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Date Dr. Karen Mitchell, Honors Thesis Advisor, Communications

5/10/13

Date Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

This thesis manifested itself in the form of a one-act play, which I wrote and directed at the University of Northern Iowa's Interpreters Theatre. The play is entitled "Clogging the System" and is a comedy with seven characters and one toilet, none of which were played by me. I endeavored to examine how shame functions within our society and how it is indoctrinated at a very young age by using toilets as a vehicle to explore shame based around bodily waste. Additionally, I have incorporated the burgeoning field of literature concerning how humans negotiate the taboo placed upon doing two things every human does: urinating and defecating. While much humor is drawn from the scatological, there is a void in research and comedy questioning larger cultural taboos that are reinforced by being ashamed of our bodies and the waste they produce. As such, this play has situated itself uniquely between farce and philosophy, and has bridged the gap between serious scholastic works and a good poop joke.

Source Review

It is my belief that I have established three things to prove the efficacy of my work. The first being comedy functions within the context of theatre and performance very effectively. Second, comedy can be used to question and provoke the world around us, especially existing power structures. Finally, toilets are worth talking about. I fully recognize the absurdity of attempting to graduate from an accredited university by writing a comedy about toilets, but I unabashedly and without irony believe it is something that we need to start talking about, and comedy is both familiar to me and a very effective weapon against the innocuous.

It is worth noting that this play would not be possible without Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*. While it is not specific to the craft of playwriting, her writing exercises and advice were the guide I used when developing and writing this play. Her blueprint for free writing is where this initial concept came from, her advice for keeping and maintaining a journal

were what made it possible for this play to actually be finished and her insistence that all creative authors should understand how badly they need to write to be fulfilled forced some needed perspective onto my life. There isn't one specific thing that can be taken away from this book to cite here, rather, taken as a composite, the entire book helped me finish this project, and influenced how I write.

In 2010, Psychologists Caleb Warren and Peter McGraw developed the benign violations theory of humor, attempting to create a litmus test that could determine whether or not something is humorous objectively. This theory cannot be used to create jokes, but it can serve as a guide for whether or not something is supposed to be humorous. The theory constitutes that we find humor when an expectation is violated, but the resultant disruption of norms is deemed benign, or not harmful (McGraw, Warren). In essence, the status quo must be disrupted for humor to occur, but the joke cannot make people feel threatened; it must be a benign violation. For instance, we know toilets belong in bathrooms; to see a toilet on the street or in a living room would violate our expectations of where a toilet should be. However, this toilet poses no threat to a person's physical well-being, and is thus a benign violation, something we would find funny.

Susan Pelle's 2010 article "The 'Grotesque' Pussy: 'Transformational Shame' in Margaret Cho's Stand-up Performances" helpfully defines how humor can help negotiate shame. Margaret Cho is a queer, Asian-American comedian and performance artist known for pushing boundaries with her humor. Pelle writes, "she beautifully illustrates that shame is productive and performative not in what it 'is', *per se*, but in what it 'does' to individual bodies and social relationships" (24). Essentially, through her comedy, Cho is able to re-focus our discussion of shame within our country and the tangible effect it has on our society. Additionally, Pelle effectively illustrates what happens when our norms are challenged by elucidating the societal

reaction to Cho's performance, "Because Cho's body threatens to contaminate and infect the orderly normative one, it must be contained, tamed, and/or eliminated" (29). Both of these arguments show how effective humor can be when it is performed, despite the inherent risks. Humor makes us question the world around us, for Cho, that involves questioning what it is to be queer or ethnic within America, for the purposes of this play, it involves questioning why we are ashamed of what our body naturally does.

Editor of the website poopreport.com Dave Praeger wrote the fantastic "Poop Culture: How America is Shaped by Its Grossest National Product" in 2007. His chapter on humor is apt when reviewing literature concerning toilet humor. According to Praeger, poop humor comes in three different categories: scatological humor, scatological satire and scatological redemption. Humor can easily be thought of as any joke that "invokes the disgust surrounding the bodies waste products for laughs" (Praeger 191-2). Scatological humor simply makes fun of poop for existing, whereas satire channels laughter into criticism. The example used in the book is a *South Park* episode starring Mr. Hanky, the Christmas poop. Mr. Hanky always says the right thing, and is a moral character, but is also just a piece of crap. The satire comes into play when juxtaposing morality with what we consider immoral: feces. Finally, scatological redemption is a carnivalesque joke that can "redeem both the oppressors and the oppressed" (Praeger 200). This type of humor is the least common, but very interesting. Normally, humor is aimed at somebody; it has a victim. It might be therapeutic for those laughing, but those being laughed at normally don't share the opinion. However, in redemptive humor, the joke is directed at the oppressor, who must submit to it being funny, allowing the oppressed to laugh. I will be employing all three types of humor within my play.

Oddly enough, there is also precedent for this type of performance. Dr. Danielle McGeough's dissertation performance was entitled "Shit Happens," and explicitly explored the taboo surrounding poop in our culture. While the focus of my play is more toilet oriented, reading a performance concerned with the product that goes into toilets was certainly helpful. McGeough also navigated between the serious and surreal, effectively utilizing humor to de-fang a very charged topic. She has also been an invaluable resource to have at UNI, and I have had many meetings in her office, having very serious conversations about poop.

Now that I have reviewed some literature concerning humor, theater, and how the two can combine to force people to question the status quo, I will begin my argument for why we have to start talking about bodily waste. Sociologist Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* outlines a very simple concept for shame. It occurs when we feel something is dirty; which is a product of dirt being in the wrong place. For instance, dirt on the ground is not dirty, that is where dirt belongs and exists and is thus harmonious with our expectations. However, when dirt leaves the ground and is tracked onto carpets and floors, then they become dirty, because dirt has been displaced into a foreign place. Similarly, seeing a toilet in a bathroom will not cause concern: that is where toilets are designed to be. However, a toilet in a living room would be a disruption of norms, and dissonance would be created through the toilet existing in a place that it should not be, causing discomfort and shame.

Toilets represent a liminal space between public and private. Even when one is using a public restroom, there is a reasonable expectation for privacy. In Gay Hawkins book *The Ethics of Waste*, she writes "the sewer may be a great technological achievement, but it is also what *literally* connects shit as public problem and shit as private secret" (Hawkins 49). So, we view bathroom rituals as private affairs, despite the public nature of the problems they create. It

represents cognitive dissonance, a dissonance I attempt to resolve within the play, by placing a toilet within the confines of a conference room: there is no disconnect between public and private.

To put it very bluntly, people do not want to talk about human waste. In a meeting with Dr. McGeough, she regaled me with tales of resistance against her dissertation. The concept of her performance and my play is one that will make people uncomfortable. While I attempted to ease the audience into such a charged subject, I fully anticipated the discomfort some audience members felt. But it's something that needs to be talked about. We are raised to be ashamed of something every single human being does, which is absolutely ludicrous. Through humor, however, I had the opportunity to explore the ramifications and origins of that shame in an attempt to reconcile our culture with its fatalistic tendencies toward shaming others and ourselves.

Central Themes

The entirety of this play is an exploration of shame that revolves around the nexus of a fully public toilet. Essentially, imagine that instead of bathrooms, there are just toilets in classrooms. If a student has to urinate during class, they simply get up and do it. While I don't advocate for this to happen in reality, I think it is a very fertile concept to explore shame. The play revolves around a company which integrates fully public toilets. While there is initial blowback from the employees, it is clear that everyone has to assimilate to them or lose their job. Now, we have seven narratives about people who are ashamed of their bodies and what they produce.

As is evidenced every day, each person has a different concept of shame, so each narrative is different. Some are ashamed on the basis of their gender, concepts of decency,

societal expectations. Regardless, the play endeavors to explore why we are ashamed, and it is something we have chosen, something we are born into, or something that we are forced into through external pressure. As this is a creative work, there are more questions than answers. But they are questions that we aren't asking as a society, something this project is attempting to change.

The Directing Process

As a student director in the Intepreters Theatre, it was my responsibility to cast the play, design and build the set, direct the students, do publicity, and ensure that the process ran as smoothly as possible. I had plenty of help from Dr. Paul J. Siddens, III, who was my technical director and Becca Griffin, my stage manager. Together, we made sure that we could all be proud of the product. I can honestly say the process forced me to learn more in the span of one month than any other experience I have had at UNI.

The process began with auditions, which were held the week we returned from winter break. The process was arduous, to say the least. I had scheduled two days for auditions, and attendance was very low. Not enough people came to cast the entire show. So I had to hold an extra day of auditions and contact a few individuals to set up personal auditions and was able to cobble together a cast. It was not the ideal way to start the directing process, but I was very fortunate that every person who auditioned was capable of playing their role effectively, and despite the low turnout, I was still in a very good position.

After casting the play, I constructed a schedule that catered to the needs of my actors and held rehearsal on Monday through Thursday for four weeks. While all actors were not present every night, because they have lives, I was able to spend a lot of time with each person in my cast, the most enjoyable aspect of the show. The atmosphere at rehearsal always maintained a

good balance between fun and productivity. The whole cast got along, everyone met the deadlines for memorization, and the easiest aspect of this process was rehearsal; everything fell into place when it needed to, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Each rehearsal began with warm ups, to loosen vocal chords and inhibitions. After that, we would run the specific scenes we had allotted for that night and I would write notes to give to the actors. The first week of rehearsal was spent blocking the show and developing characters. After the blocking was solidified, it became a process that revolved around constant practice that made the scenes consistent and funny. The nature of my notes reflected the change in tone at rehearsal, by the end of the rehearsal process they were very specific because all of the broad strokes had been taken care of.

The publicity aspect of the show was something I had very little experience with. Meghan Wharff, the graduate student who does public relations, was indispensable in this process. She was intermediary for College of Humanities Arts and Sciences-Tech, helped me design the posters, hung them around campus and was always willing to help, happily and promptly. I did all of the standard publicity for a show, hanging posters around campus and at local businesses, as well as creating a facebook event and advertising through social media. However, my favorite part of the publicity was organizing a flash squat in the Union, which was Dr. Danielle McGeough's idea. A squat is an event where volunteers squat for a minute to show solidarity for those who do not have access to proper sanitation. She held one on LSU's campus when she directed her show and helped me organize one on our campus. The event consisted of gathering volunteers, giving them all signs that we had drawn that either advertised the show or raised awareness about global sanitation rights. On February 27th, we marched into the union and squatted from 12:00 p.m. to 12:01 p.m. while holding the signs. The event helped create

discourse about an issue that I care deeply about, and successfully advertised the show. I'm very proud of how it turned out.

Thankfully, I had always envisioned a minimalist set; I come from a background entrenched in performers being able to conjure a sense of setting through performance, and the set was fairly primitive. There was a conference table I was able to borrow for the duration of the play, a white board, chairs I commandeered from the Communication Studies department for the duration of the play, posters designed by CHAS-Tech that were strewn from wires across the set and a used toilet Dr. Siddens got from his contractor. The miscellaneous props the play required were all easy to track down: either the Interpreters theatre already had them or they were available at Goodwill. Two weeks before the show, I met with my technical crew and Dr. Siddens and painted and constructed a rolling platform that the toilet was placed on and adjusted lights to accommodate the needs of the play. The whole process ran very smoothly.

The directing process was more taxing than I had imagined. My conception of the process was mostly tethered to the hope that I would have lots of time to work with the actors, I didn't think about the set or publicity or the myriad other little things necessary to put on a successful production. That said, by being forced to plan and execute plans on each of these dimensions required a lot of managerial skills, charisma and forethought, three things that I desperately needed to work on. By jumping into this process, I think I was able to hone and refine a lot of existing skills, as well as discover new ones.

Reception

The show ran for three nights, February 28th and March 1-2nd. After each show, the cast stayed on stage and I led a talk back, which is essentially the time for the audience to ask questions of anyone in the cast and try and create a discussion. The show sold out on the first

night, and the other two nights were a few seats shy of that mark. I was ecstatic to have a full house for the shows run, and I had many unforgettable experiences in that span of time.

The interesting thing about the shows was how different the audience reacted, both during the show and the talk back. On Thursday, people laughed more than the other nights, but the talkback was the most surface level. By Saturday, we had the quietest audience who had the most in-depth and lively talkback of the three nights. I am fascinated by the inverse relationship between laughter and discourse. On Thursday and Friday, people had to verify that the play was an anecdote with larger social implications, something I thought was apparent. But Saturday's talkback started where the other talkbacks ended, and the audience jumped right into the social implications. Two men I had not met before talked at length about how profoundly the message affected of them. The audience talked about the efficacy of public toilets, how shame is socialized and hit all the notes I was trying to write about. One person even asked me if I would consider installing fully public toilets at his business. I declined. Within the context of these three performances, I felt like I was able to experience a wide range of reactions, and each audience fulfilled a different aspiration for what this show could represent.

The moment that affected me the most came after Friday's show. A father of one of the cast members spoke to me very genuinely and very freely about the effect it had on him. He confessed that he was brought up in a racist and homophobic household, and he believed that my show helped him break down some of those barriers in his life. I cannot properly articulate how rewarding this was. As somebody who believes in the power of performance, and the capacity art has to change the world around us, this interaction reinforced what I know to be true in the world. Even if this play was a comedy, about toilets no less, it has always been my goal to make

the audience question the reality they have constructed in their own lives and to become better people in the process. To have tangible proof of this is indescribably rewarding.

Clogging the System

A one-act play

By Harrison Postler

Contact:
Harrison Postler
2124 W. 21st street, apt. 424
Cedar Falls, IA 52240
harrisonpostlersemail@yahoo.com

CHARACTERS

4 M, 3 F

TOM 23, fresh out of college. An ill-fitting black suit.

GIL 51, a wizened sage of corporate corruption. Brown suit.

GARY 42, full mustache.

MARCIA 34, PTA Mom. Pale pink sweater, khakis.

JANICE 37, second in command. Pant-suit.

ROBERT 45, CEO. Blue-tooth and pinstripe suit. Man-child.

DANDELION 26, Activist, most likely high.

SETTING

Conference room in a non-descript company. There is a large oak table with black office chairs surrounding it. There is a white board on the wall and one door on stage left. Starting with scene three, there is a toilet in the room.

SCENE ONE

Lights up. TOM sits at the far end of the conference room poring over pieces of paper. GIL's voice is heard offstage. He is on the phone. His rage should build logically during his monologue

GIL

Yeah. I know. We've got to downsize, I understand. I'm just going to run over what we just discussed just to make sure I have it right. By "we are cutting some of the dead weight" what you mean is we have to get rid of some employees. And by "I hope you know that we consider you an asset" I assume you mean that I'm on the list of people you consider dead weight. Do I have that right? You're looking for people to fire and you're scoping me out. Well, it's been a great 22 years with this company, may you rot in hell. Alright, goodbye. Have a great fucking day.

(hangs up the phone violently)

Fuck.

GIL opens the door to the conference room and is surprised to see TOM in there. TOM looks up and smiles. GIL stifles his frustration from the phone call for the time being and attempts to appear normal.

TOM

Hey Gil.

GIL

Tom. What are you doing here so late?

TOM

Oh, just looking for inspiration. I have to present about the new building tomorrow and I've only been employed here for, like, a week. I couldn't tell you where the bathrooms are in here, much less what we need to improve on when we move locations.

GIL

Sounds tough. Who's going to be there?

TOM

Janice and Robert I think.

GIL

May God have mercy on your soul.

TOM

Why?

GIL

Apparently Bob told Janice to cut some dead weight. So it looks like we're going to be short a few employees in the coming days. You had a good couple of weeks. Look at the bright side, you're young, you have no experience and you're in the worst economic depression since the great one.

TOM

Are you serious?

GIL

I am notoriously unfunny.

TOM

I am so screwed.

GIL

You'll be fine. Keep your head up or something like that.

(pause)

Want some help?

TOM

Would you do that for me?

GIL

Ease up with the emotions, kid. Your parents hugged you too much growing up.

TOM

I guess the real world is a little bit different than advertised in the classroom.

GIL

If they told you the truth nobody would leave school.

TOM

Good point.

GIL

Okay, give me a rundown of what you have to do again.

TOM

Well, Robert and Janice asked me and a few other people to put together presentations of what we can do to make the new building better. So far, I have the words "new" and "building" written on my sheet of paper.

GIL

You got to start somewhere, I guess.

TOM

I guess.

They both pause. GIL takes a seat next to TOM as the two look around the room looking to draw inspiration from something.

GIL

We could just fuck with them.

TOM

What do you mean?

GIL

We could just get them all riled up and you could go out with a bang.

TOM

I think I'm going to try and keep my job.

GIL

I'll even go in with you. For moral support. I'm getting the ax anyway

TOM

You're getting fired?

GIL

So I propose that we take this opportunity given to us to let the folks in charge know exactly how we feel. And since violence is discouraged in this country, our words will have to do.

TOM

Jesus, Gil, I'm sorry.

GIL

I will only accept your apology if you morally degrade Janice and Robert tomorrow. Go down swinging!

TOM

Am I getting fired?

GIL

I can't say for certain. But that mostly blank piece of paper you're calling a presentation speaks for itself.

TOM

You have a point.

GIL

Now, what do you say? Give 'em hell before we take our leave of this place, or wallow in mediocrity?

TOM

I choose hell.

GIL

Good. Now let's get started.

TOM

What happens now?

GIL

Now, we have to think of something that will really unnerve them. We have to think like them, eat like them, poop like them.

TOM

Okay, let's just pretend that this analogy makes sense. How do you propose we think like people who view us not as employees but as pawns, eat like people who can get into any restaurant in the city and probably haven't touched ramen noodles in their lives and poop like people who have a gold-plated toilet.

GIL

Simple. We get rid of what separates us from them.

TOM

Which is?

GIL

Power.

TOM

And how do we do that with a presentation?

GIL

You already said it, we propose something that would force them to be equals with everyone in the office. That'll scare the shit out of them.

TOM

I've just had a wonderful idea.

GIL

What?

TOM

Scare the shit out of them.

GIL

You've lost me, kid.

TOM

Well, basically we've concluded that we need to make everyone equal in the office building, and we don't have control over their thoughts or their eating habits, but we do have control over the bathrooms. So why don't we propose (pause) fully public bathrooms.

GIL

Because that's an awful idea. I'd think of more reasons but I'm not sure anyone who would suggest that can be reasoned with.

TOM

Hear me out, okay? Why don't we suggest that in the new building we don't have bathrooms, we just have toilets.

GIL

What's the fucking difference?

TOM

Like, we just have a toilet here instead of a chair. When you have to go poop, you just do it.

GIL

Right there?

TOM

Right here.

GIL

That's a shitty idea.

TOM

Do you have any other ideas? Shitty or not.

GIL

It would be funny. Not quite what I had in mind when I said raise hell, but I applaud you fresh college grads for thinking outside of the box. Or stall, as it were.

TOM

Right, let's hammer out the details.

GIL

We need to make this look like a real proposal. I mean, as eloquent as you were back there, I don't think that saying we should just poop in the conference room in the new building quite does your idea justice.

TOM

We should make up a word, people are doing that all the time. Like ingivation, or flowism.

GIL

Ah yes, flowism. What a wonderful word you've invented. Remind me, again, how did you get hired?

TOM

We need a word that's clearly made up and clearly bullshit to anyone except the most unsuspecting suit.

GIL

How about synchronomacitation?

TOM

I like that! Synchrono-emaciation. Synchrono-emasulation. Synchrono-ejaculation. What was it again?

GIL

Synchronomacitation. And we could make up some hoopla about it being a theme for the building, a theme of unity or something.

TOM

Unity is one of my favorite things, Gil.

GIL

I'm glad.

TOM

We should demonstrate what it would be like.

GIL

You mean, like, poop in front of them?

TOM

No, not actually. But, you know, like I narrate what a normal day in the office is like in this new building, the undiscovered frontier. And after we talk about synchronomacitation and the need for all employees to be on equal footing in the new building and blah blah blah, we launch into a demonstration where you grab a chair as a stand-in for a toilet, look clearly and intently into Robert's eyes and pretend to take a shit.

GIL

I like that! I think my career metaphorically dying on the toilet will be the closest I'll ever get to being Elvis.

TOM

And then we exit the room with grace, file for unemployment and hold our heads high with our noses upturned to avoid the stench.

GIL

It's a plan, now go and get some sleep, you got a big day tomorrow.

TOM

I've never heard that many clichés packed into one sentence before, Gil. You're like the perfect businessman.

GIL

Shut up, kid.

Lights down.

SCENE TWO

Lights up on Janice and Robert, sitting at the far end of the conference room table.

ROBERT

How many more of these presentations do we have to sit through?

JANICE

One, sir.

ROBERT

Jesus. Can't we just tell them we're selling the company and it doesn't matter?

JANICE

We don't have a reason to sell it yet, sir.

ROBERT

I wish I'd done a shittier job when I started the company. Then we could just bankrupt her now.

JANICE

We wouldn't be in this position had you done a poor job, sir.

ROBERT

But Janice, I want to go golfing!

JANICE

Just a couple of more hours, sir.

ROBERT

Do we have to?

JANICE

Yes.

ROBERT

Even if I really don't want to?

JANICE

Even if you really don't want to.

ROBERT

I hate owning a business.

JANICE

The nation feels for you.

ROBERT

Well lets just hope the next group has some really bad ideas.

JANICE

Right, sir.

TOM and GIL enter the room. TOM leads and walks with confidence. GIL slinks in and melts into a chair.

TOM

Good morning, madame and sir!

JANICE

Morning. What have you got for us?

TOM

Toilets.

ROBERT

Toilets?

TOM

Yeah. The things you poop in.

JANICE

I'm familiar.

ROBERT

So am I!

TOM

Great! That'll shave some time off of the presentation. When I was first told that I had an opportunity to present for the owner of this corporation, I was ecstatic. Not like I had just taken ecstasy ecstatic, but like happy ecstatic. But then I thought to myself, "Gee Tom, you got yourself into a real pickle here, what are you going to talk about? How will you make this great place better? What I took to be an already perfect place. Well, as my friend Gil pointed out, Gil, be friendly...

GIL

Hi.

ROBERT

Who are you?

GIL

Just some dead weight.

TOM

Nonsense, he is the man behind this whole operation.

GIL

It was a more of a joint effort, to be fair.

TOM

Stop being humble, he's the one who told me about synchronomacitation.

ROBERT

Synchro-what?

TOM

Gil can explain it better than I can.

GIL

I shouldn't.

TOM

You should.

GIL

The process of corporate singularity.

ROBERT

I haven't heard that before. How come I haven't heard that before, Janice?

JANICE

I don't know, sir.

TOM

You haven't heard it because it's a little something my friend Gil and I thought of.

GIL

All by ourselves, isn't that right, Tom?

TOM

That's right. Now, what's the first thing most people do when they come into work in the morning?

GIL

They go to the bathroom.

JANICE

So what?

TOM

So what? So what!?! That means that the first thing that happens when you come into work is you put yourself in a little box with four little walls that separate you from the rest of the corporation. Now I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound like synchronomacitation to me.

ROBERT

I still don't know what that is.

GIL

Try and keep up, sir.

TOM

So, what Gil and I propose, what we propose is that in the new building we have fully public toilets.

JANICE

Is that what it sounds like?

GIL

It's exactly what it sounds like.

TOM

Now, imagine this, if you will. I'm going to talk, Gil will do the acting. You walk into work in the morning, at the best job in the universe, Gil, start walking. And you get to work, unpack your briefcase, whistle a happy song from days past and you realize, uh oh, you've got to use the bathroom. In a normal office building, you have to look around in shame and waddle off to the bathroom where you clench your butt cheeks together every time somebody else walks into the bathroom. Gil, clench your butt cheeks. Now, that's no fun. That just separates you from your co-workers.

ROBERT

Right.

TOM

But, if we have fully public bathrooms, we don't have to be ashamed anymore. Gil can just walk in and take a seat on a toilet, Gil, take a seat, and just let loose. He can even say hi to his coworkers while he's doing his business. He can take phone calls, read mail, catch up with a friend. You name it, he can do it. Doesn't that just sound wonderful?

There is long pause as ROBERT and JANICE take a moment to register what has just been said. TOM takes a seat and looks confident, GIL stares down ROBERT and contorts his face to look like he is caught up in the throes of a bad bout with PF Changs. Eventually, the silence is broken.

Alright. Sounds good.

ROBERT

What?

TOM

You convinced me, we'll do it.

ROBERT

Really?

GIL

Yeah, you two are in charge. Start doing focus groups as soon as we move.

ROBERT

You're sure?

TOM

We're sure.

JANICE

Great... Uh, great. Well, we'll just be going then. Also, Janice about the phone call last night.

GIL

Don't worry about it. We consider you an asset.

JANICE

Okay. Great. We'll just, uh-

GIL

Have a good day, Gil.

JANICE

Okay. Good bye.

GIL

GIL and TOM exit, stunned.

JANICE

So, why did we just do that, sir?

ROBERT

Well now, we can shut the company down almost as soon as we move locations.

JANICE

Okay, but can we at least agree those two are idiots?

ROBERT

Oh, most definitely. That's why I hired them.

JANICE

Jesus, what are we getting ourselves into?

ROBERT

Stop thinking, Janice. It's not very flattering.

JANICE

Yes, sir.

ROBERT

Well, I'm going to go golfing. If anybody calls me, pretend you are an automated voice and the number is disconnected. Do your best robot impression for me, earn your keep.

JANICE

Yes, sir.

ROBERT

Excellent. I love running a business.

Lights down.

SCENE THREE

Lights up on the conference room. It is the same, except for the toilet. GIL and TOM walk in, sizing up the place.

TOM

So, this is the new building?

GIL

They didn't really do much with the place.

TOM

Yeah, it looks pretty much the same.

GIL

Cheap-asses.

TOM sees the toilet and excitedly approaches it.

TOM

Gil, look! It's here.

GIL

It really is.

TOM

So, what happens now?

GIL

What do you mean?

TOM

Well, what's the next step of our plan? What do we do, now that the toilets are here.

GIL

There is no next step. They were never actually supposed to be here, Tom. The next step of our plan was to get fired. Did you miss that part?

TOM

Well, clearly, we're not fired, so what do we do next?

GIL

Tom, I don't know. I never actually thought about all this.

TOM

Well, start thinking.

GIL

I guess, we just wait. See what people say.

TOM

Good plan.

GIL

(beat)Did you ever think about this? The whole, fully public toilet thing.

TOM

The thing about me, Gil, is that I rarely think before I act.

GIL

Well, that's become abundantly clear by this point. But just pretend that you did.

TOM

I do love make believe.

GIL

So, what would you do, about the... the toilets.

TOM

I'd use them. But only for the bathroom.

GIL

You mean you're actually going to use these things?

TOM

You aren't?

GIL

No, that's disgusting.

TOM

Gil, it was our idea.

GIL

I know, I know. If I had it my way, they'd have just fired me.

TOM

It's not too late to quit.

GIL

No, I started this thing. I'm gonna finish it.

TOM

How benevolent.

GIL

I can't believe we got ourselves into this.

TOM

It's best we just accept it. What could go wrong?

JANICE burst into the room.

JANICE

How dumb are you two?

GIL

Nice to see you, Janice.

TOM

That depends on who you ask.

JANICE

I know you thought this whole toilet thing was really cute, and funny, and you got to look Robert in the face while you fake pooped, but are you actually insisting that we go through with this?

TOM

I'm afraid we do insist. Gil and I have put a lot of thought into this.

JANICE

Really? A lot of thought.

TOM

About as much as I'm capable of.

GIL

Which isn't saying much.

JANICE

Alright, since you've thought about this so much, what are you going to do when somebody clogs these toilets.

GIL

Shit.

TOM
We are... going to... unclog them.

JANICE
Who? You two?

TOM
Yes.

GIL
No.

TOM
Yes. Gil and I will be unclogging these toilets, if and when there is a need.

GIL
Oh my God. This is not what I signed up for.

TOM
But you're going to do it right, Gil? You're going to see this thing out, see it finished? That's what you said earlier.

GIL
Thank you for reminding me.

JANICE
Perfect. Glad we got that settled.

TOM
I am too.

JANICE
Next issue. What are you going to do when the employees complain?

TOM
We're going to listen. It's about time somebody did that around here.

JANICE
So, you're telling me that you will hear every complaint that people have about this, that I can just send them your way.

TOM
That is what we're telling you.

GIL
That's what you're telling her.

JANICE

And you won't mind at all?

TOM

Not one bit.

JANICE

Well, I'll have a schedule to you by the end of the day, with all your meetings. But don't worry, I'll leave some time for you to unclog the toilets. Every day.

TOM

I look forward to it.

JANICE

You are determined to see this through, aren't you?

TOM

Completely.

JANICE

Fine. One last question. What are you going to do about the thing women have to do in the bathroom but men don't?

TOM

I don't follow. Gil, is there a secret bathroom trick that only girls do?

GIL

I'm afraid I don't get it either, Janice. Wait, I get it. Oh, God. I never thought about that. What a shitstorm.

JANICE

Are you going to clean that up too?

GIL

Oh, God. I'm gonna throw up!

TOM

Guys, what are we talking about?

JANICE

It can get pretty messy.

GIL

Janice, please stop talking.

TOM

Talking about what? Come on, fill me in!

GIL

Don't worry, it only happens once a month.

JANICE

But they'll be happening all month. Everyone's different, Gil! Don't you see, it won't end.

TOM

What are we talking about! Somebody tell me, or I am going to scream.

JANICE

Well, I'll leave you all to think about that.

GIL

Janice, I'm so sorry.

JANICE

Have fun with all your meetings. I'll let you know when we need cleaning duty. Oh, and get a box. A little white box.

JANICE exits.

GIL

Oh, Jesus. What have we done.

There is a long pause. GIL is distraught and despondent, while TOM is lost in thought.

TOM

Oh, I get it. She was talking about periods! She was talking about periods. Oh, shit.

SCENE FOUR

GARY is sitting at the head of the conference room table. He appears nervous. TOM and GIL walk in the room and take seats opposite him. There is an overly ornate white box sitting near the toilet, as per JANICE's request.

GIL

Gary, how are you? Did Janice send you?

GARY

Yes. I'm doing good, Gil. Yourself?

GIL

I can't complain. (pause) Well, Gary, this is my partner Tom. Tom, say hi.

TOM

Hi, I'm Tom.

GIL

That's enough, Tom. The reason we brought you in here today is we think you have been invaluable in the synchronomacitation process.

GARY

The what?

GIL

Synchronomacitation.

GARY

I heard you. What the hell is it?

GIL

Well, it's the process our company is currently undertaking to maximize productivity.

TOM

It's the toilets.

GIL

Thank you, Tom.

GARY

And why am I a part of this process?

GIL

You were the first to capitalize on this new venture. And we admire your initiative, we want to learn more about it.

GARY

You mean I was the first one to poop?

TOM

Yup.

GARY

And that's a good thing?

TOM

Yup.

GARY

Okay, I'm confused.

GIL

Gary, Gary, Gary. Relax. You aren't on trial here, you are here because of the insight you can add to the synchronomacitation experiment. You're agent X, patient zero, the genesis of unity in our great company.

GARY

That's a bit of an overstatement.

TOM

Stop being humble, Gary. You're our Batman.

GARY

Batman?

GIL

Yeah, I think what Tom was trying to say is...

TOM

You're our Batman. Like, our hero. The Hero our toilets deserve.

GIL

Your contribution is just the first in a long road towards unity.

GARY

Okay. So, what do you want to know?

GIL

Walk us through your thought process when you pooped. What motivated you? Why did you decide to be the first one? As you know, the process has been met with some initial resistance.

TOM

What makes you poop, Gary?

GARY

For the record. I think what you guys are doing is indecent. I don't agree with it at all. In fact, just thinking about it makes me shudder. And the only reason I was the first person to go is I was tired of waiting until I got home to use the bathroom. You forced me into this. You forced everyone into this! Everyone in my department couldn't believe their eyes when we got to the new building. We waited a week before I finally broke down and went...

TOM

Potty.

GARY

Sure. And that's just because I was tired of being ashamed every day when I went to work. That's what you did, you made your employees feel ashamed. And I was tired of it, so I stood up from my desk after lunch, marched to the nearest toilet and did my business. And I could feel everybody's eyes on me, but I just looked straight ahead because I couldn't live like I was ashamed anymore. The shame you gave me.

TOM

What kind of poop was it?

GARY

The shit kind.

TOM

Hmm, that's very interesting. Are you taking note's Gil? His poop was the shit kind.

GARY

Are you patronizing me?

TOM

To be fair, you beat me to it.

GIL

Well, that's interesting, Gary, you seem pretty angry.

TOM

How did you feel afterward?

GARY

What do you mean, how did I feel? Lighter, I guess.

TOM

No, you said you felt ashamed before, how did you feel after?

GARY

Well, I felt a lot better. Like I could do anything. If I can poop in public, then what is there left to fear?

TOM

Then why are you angry at us?

GARY

Because you make people feel ashamed with the damn toilets.

TOM

Didn't you just say how euphoric it felt to use them?

GARY

Yeah, I suppose I did.

TOM

I rest my case.

GARY

Gil, do you want to punch this kid as badly as I do?

GIL

Certainly.

TOM

Just aim for the face.

GARY

You little bastard.

TOM

And you are an ignorant old man.

GARY

What is the point of this interview?

GIL

Well, we just want to gather some intel.

TOM

He's out of intelligence, Gil. He must have used it all up to find his way to this office.

GIL

If you don't shut up, I will let him punch you.

TOM

Don't mind me, I'm just a little bastard.

GIL

Gary, what has the mood been in the office since you pooped?

GARY

Well, pretty much everyone else uses the toilets now too.

GIL

But not everyone?

TOM

That's what pretty much everyone means, Gil.

GARY

Where did you find this kid?

TOM

A small, fatherless home of the coast of Delaware.

GIL

Tom, shut up.

GARY

But, yes. I don't think everyone uses them. I don't know.

GIL

And what could we do to make everyone feel more comfortable?

GARY

Get normal bathrooms.

GIL

Other than that.

GARY

I don't know. And it's not my job to care. I'm going to go, I've got to piss.

GIL

Fair enough, goodbye Gary.

TOM

See you later, Batman.

GARY

Tomorrow's Taco Tuesday, we'll see who's laughing then.

GARY exits.

GIL

What the fuck is your problem, Tom?

TOM

What?

GIL

Why were you such an asshole to Gary?

TOM

Isn't that what we're doing?

GIL

No. That is not at all what we are doing.

TOM

But you said we were raising hell.

GIL

And then we kept our fucking jobs, so shove hell back inside your body and get ready to get back to work.

TOM

Ah, so this is purgatory.

GIL

It amazes me that you have a college degree.

TOM

Summa Cum Laude.

GIL

It amazes me more that you can pronounce those words.

TOM

Only took me four years of practice.

GIL

Your parents must be so proud.

TOM

Just my mom. Bastard, remember?

GIL

Just stop it. Let's continue our jobs with a little dignity.

TOM

Got it. Who should we interview about poop next?

Lights fade.

SCENE FIVE

Lights up. GIL and TOM are both reading magazines at the board room table, each attempting to distract themselves from the absence of excitement in the day. GIL yawns, TOM catches the contagion and follows suit. After a brief pause, TOM gets up and proceeds to use the toilet while still reading the magazine. GIL's eyes continually dart between the toilet and his magazine. GIL coughs. TOM is oblivious and after he is finished, realizes there is no toilet paper. He points at a roll on the table and whistles. GIL begrudgingly throws it. After TOM is finished, he flushes and the smell hits him. He waves his hand in front of his face and winces, exhaling slowly. The stench wafts towards GIL, who stands up, looks at TOM disapprovingly and marches out of the conference room. TOM looks around, confused and looking for the source of GIL's frustration, then he shrugs, takes a seat with his legs on the table and resumes reading his magazine. There is a laborious silence as both tension and odor hang in the air before GIL bursts into the room with air freshener and proceeds to coat the place. He makes sure to get all of TOM's body in the process. After he is finished, he resumes his seat and unfluffs his magazine and pretends to read while he is really waiting to see TOM's reaction. TOM farts and cracks a small smile as Gil throws up his hands in frustration, casting the magazine into the air. TOM stands up, picks up the air freshener, hands it to GIL and sits back down to finish his magazine.

TOM

Sometimes I wonder what we're doing to people.

GIL

What do you mean?

TOM

Well, when you first pitched the idea, I didn't really think it through. Like, psychologically.

GIL

What's to think through?

TOM

We really fucked with people with this whole toilet thing. Like, made people confront some heavy duty issues just to perform a basic function.

GIL

I think you're exaggerating.

TOM

No, think about it. You spend your whole life knowing people poop, but never having to actually think about it. And then we come in and change all that. For a job. Just seems like it might not be our place.

GIL

We're constantly being told what to think. How is this different?

TOM

I don't think that's true.

GIL

You were just in college, right?

TOM

Right.

GIL

And when your professors taught you, did they actually teach?

TOM

Well, yeah.

GIL

And to teach, I assume they told you what was right and wrong in the world, maybe not in those concrete of terms, but they gave you an idea.

TOM

That's not the same as-

GIL

And your parents, did they have rules?

TOM

Yes.

GIL

And our boss here, does he tell you what to do and what to think about it?

TOM

It's not the same.

GIL

How?

TOM

Well, this is a corporation, it doesn't have the ability to tell actual people how to think. Much less where it's socially acceptable to poop.

GIL

Corporations are constantly telling us what to think.

TOM

Doesn't make it right.

GIL

Look, I show up in a suit every day.

TOM

I'm aware.

GIL

I hate wearing suits, but I have to. For a job.

TOM

You hate wearing suits?

GIL

Hate it.

TOM

You look good in a suit, Gil.

GIL

Doesn't make it right.

TOM

But that's done so we can appear professional, not so we can perform a basic bodily function.

GIL

All of this is made up. The suits, the toilets, the money.

TOM

The smell is real.

GIL

And that's it. This job only exists because everyone agreed that it would be a good idea. Money is around because we need a made up system to keep people from killing each other. The suits are so we can tell who is the least likely to kill somebody, and the toilets are so Robert can remind us of our disgusting roots. We all poop, he knows that, we thought this would be a great equalizer, but it's turned into another way to stratify the company.

TOM

Hmm. Never thought about it like that. It's still wrong.

GIL

Even if I agree, what are you going to do about it? Write a blog post?

TOM

How did you know I blog?

GIL

I had a hunch. And stop worrying so much, you're not the boss.

TOM

I'm aware. At least we still have jobs. But, Gil, why do you not care?

GIL

It's really not that hard. You just have to stop caring.

TOM

And that's it?

GIL

That's it.

TOM

How?

GIL

Well, first. Get a job right out of college with a bushy eye and a bright tail, and then spend the next twenty-two years being beaten in to the ground by the idiocy of those around you. After about fifteen years it gets easier.

TOM

Jesus, Gil.

GIL

You asked. Damn it, Tom, how can you ass still smell that bad?

TOM

Can't be worse than Taco Tuesday.

GIL

Don't remind me. I've unclogged enough toilets for a lifetime.

TOM

Well, tomorrow's Tuesday, you'll remember then.

GIL

Shut up, kid.

Lights fade

SCENE SIX

Lights up on the conference room. MARCIA sits in the conference room with GIL and TOM

MARCIA

Good morning, gentlemen. My name is Marcia and I hate you.

GIL

Morning.

MARCIA

I heard what you guys are doing with the toilets and I wanted to peek my head in real quick to tell you how sinful it is. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

GIL

We understand your concern, Marcia, we thought this was a little weird/ at first but, as a company, we've gotten used to it. Hell, we even like it.

MARCIA

/Sinful.

TOM

It's kind of freeing, you know?

MARCIA

Well, I wouldn't know about freedom. All I now is when my kids saw this on the news and told me about it, I just got so darn mad.

(laughs)

Like, really crippling rage, just all through my body. You know what my boy Timmy did after he saw all this? He peed in the sink. Just jumped up and let loose. I saw the whole thing. And let me tell you, there are better ways to find out your boy has become a man. So, you think about that.

GIL

I'm very sorry, m'am. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel here/ but our productivity and employee happiness has skyrocketed.

TOM

/Just the bowl.

MARCIA

I don't care. You're making my job as a parent a lot harder. Have some compassion.

TOM stands up during the conversation and begins to pee in the toilet located in the conference room. GIL doesn't flinch. MARCIA is livid.

GIL

M'am we hear you loud and clear.

TOM

Speaking of clear.

MARCIA

What is he doing right now?

(MARCIA points to TOM)

Is he peeing in front of me?

TOM

He can hear you and yes he is.

MARCIA

What makes you think you can do that?

TOM

I had to pee. So I'm peeing.

MARCIA

That is disgusting.

TOM finishes and flushes, grabs some hand sanitizer and looks at MARCIA.

TOM

What's disgusting?

MARCIA

You peed right in front of me.

TOM

I know, I had to pee.

MARCIA

So go to the bathroom.

TOM

I just did. You were here.

MARCIA

You two are going to hell.

TOM

What did Gil do?

MARCIA

Nothing. But guess who else did nothing? Peter, he did nothing to Jesus three times.

TOM

So now you're making this metaphorical crucifixion of our business into a literal one. You are a gem.

GIL

Tom, calm down.

MARCIA

What if I bring in my son right now? How about you explain to him why he can't watch TV for a week.

TOM

A week? That seems a bit much.

MARCIA

Now it's a month. You happy?

TOM

Are you trying to punish me by grounding your son?

MARCIA

Now I'm just going to throw the TV out when I get home. There are some things he doesn't need to see, some things you should be ashamed of.

TOM

You know what, she's right. Too much knowledge is always a bad thing. If he reads too many books he might get some crazy ideas, better throw those out too.

GIL

Tom, pump the brakes.

MARCIA

Maybe I will.

TOM

You should actually burn them, just to be safe. Oh, and you got to be careful about the pesky internet. Or those darn other human beings, telling him stuff he hasn't heard before. And that outdoors is a dangerous place, maybe he should just stay inside all day.

MARCIA

What are you implying?

TOM

As someone who pioneered the idea of public bathrooms, I'm a bit of an expert on shit. And I must say your parenting is the shittiest thing I've seen all year.

MARCIA reaches across the table and slaps TOM.

MARCIA

How dare you?

TOM

No, how dare you. I'm tired of people coming in here and telling us what a horrible thing we're doing. You are the person who is doing something terrible. You are making people be afraid to be themselves. I used to be ashamed of who I was because I lived in a world where shame was par for the course. Because mom's like you are indoctrinating little hate monsters to run amok and make everyone else feel inadequate. To me, there isn't a big jump between not being afraid to poop in public and not being afraid to talk about your faith, or love your body or fully indulge yourself into something that everybody else thinks is stupid. Here, at this corporation, we are giving people the opportunity to take that first step into being who they want to be, and that's something that I'm not going to let you take away from us. I don't care what you think, honestly, I do care that you are trying to tell me what it's okay to think. Do you understand that at all?

MARCIA

I didn't want to have to do this. I'm never letting my son outside again.

TOM

You know what, good. Now get the hell out.

MARCIA

This is an outrage. My husband knows more lawyers than you know people. And they are the unethical kind, so you're screwed.

TOM

Bring them on. I've been set free by the truth.

MARCIA

Have fun in hell.

MARCIA exits.

GIL

Well, that could have gone better.

TOM

Well, now that I thought I was going to lose my job, I've sort of let people know what I really think.

GIL

Yeah, I picked up on that.

TOM

Sorry I lost my temper, but she was just the worst.

GIL

Do you really think all that?

TOM

All what?

GIL

That what we're doing here is actually good.

TOM

Of course I do. Why?

GIL

No reason. Well, I'm going to go home for the day and await a phone call about that meeting.

TOM

Yeah, fuck. I screwed that one up, didn't I?

GIL

Don't worry about it, we've screwed everything else up already. Goodnight, kid.

TOM

Night, Gil.

GIL exits the stage. TOM swivels around in his chair while he is lost in thought. Eventually, he stands up and walks to the white board and scribbles the word hate onto it. He grabs a toilet scrubber from around the toilet and begins to scrub the word off of the black board. Lights fade.

SCENE SEVEN

GIL and TOM enter the conference room. It is early in the morning, both men should appear tired and have items denoting the time of day, such as a newspaper or coffee cups. As they enter, they see DANDELION, asleep and hugging the toilet.

GIL

Perfect.

TOM

Who do you think he is?

GIL

I don't know.

TOM

What do you think we should do?

GIL

I don't know.

TOM

You don't seem very helpful this morning.

GIL

I don't care.

TOM

Well, I'm going to try and wake him up.

GIL

Don't get too close, he might be feral.

TOM slowly approaches DANDELION. He takes the plunger and starts prodding her face with the handle, in an effort to wake her up. He starts out tentative and gets progressively braver with his thrusts.

TOM

Excuse me, sir. Excuse me? Why are you hugging our toilet?

GIL

Poke harder!

TOM acquiesces, and DANDELION slowly rises.

DANDELION

Good morning, sweet brothers!

TOM

You're not a man!

DANDELION

I am not. I am Dandelion, a disciple of Gaea, the earth mother.

GIL

Does Gaea live in a toilet now?

DANDELION

Don't be silly. Gaea does not have one home, she is everywhere, she is everything.

TOM

Then why are you here?

DANDELION

I came to celebrate with you! What you are doing here is Gaea's work. She told me in a dream. Right after I did mushrooms.

GIL

Great.

TOM

Did you sleep here?

DANDELION

Only in the physical realm. I roamed the quiet halls of nature with my mind.

GIL

When did nature install the hallways?

TOM

Well, m'am, that's nice and everything, but could you stop hugging our toilet.

DANDELION

No.

TOM

Why not?

DANDELION

Nature.

TOM

This is a toilet made of ceramic, linked to a man-made sewage system that takes gallons of water to flush. If you'd like to get in touch with nature, please pee outside.

DANDELION

Everywhere is outside when you live in harmony with Gaea.

GIL

She raises a compelling point, Tom.

TOM

Are you just going to let this happen?

GIL

I think if we let her stay around, we can convince her to unclog the toilets for us.

DANDELION

I would be honored.

TOM

No, you can't stay. And you can't sleep here anymore.

GIL

She was only resting her physical self, Tom.

TOM

You need to leave, m'am. Go start a naked drum circle outside or something.

DANDELION

I'm not leaving.

TOM

I'll call security. Gil, do we have security?

GIL

Nope, but you look like an able-bodied kid.

TOM

Ms. Dandelion, I'm sorry, but you have to leave.

DANDELION

You can't make me.

TOM

I can try.

DANDELION

I didn't want to have to do this.

DANDELION pulls out a pair of handcuffs and cuffs herself to the toilet.

TOM

Oh, what the fuck.

DANDELION

I thought this might happen. So I came prepared.

TOM

And let me guess, you hid the key.

DANDELION

I ate it with the mushrooms. I'm not getting out of these handcuffs until I poop the keys out.

TOM

You know what, fine. You're here to stay.

GIL

If you're stuck there, that means you won't be able to help unclog the toilets. I trusted you.

DANDELION

Oh, I was bluffing. To be honest, poop kind of grosses me out.

Lights fade. End of scene.

SCENE EIGHT

GIL is sitting at the conference room table. TOM enters, mid-conversation, with GARY. DANDELION is still chained to the toilet.

TOM

Like I was saying, I just wanted to apologize for the way I acted before.

GARY

This better not be some kind of prank. Is it a prank, Gil?

GIL

If it is, I don't know about it.

GARY

You were a grade a-asshole, kid.

TOM

First A I ever got.

GARY

Well. I'm leaving, if you can't take this seriously.

TOM

Gary, stop. I'm sorry. I really am. But I'm also an asshole, so forgive me when that surfaces.

GARY

It's not my job to be disrespected by you.

TOM

I know that. I'm sorry.

GIL

Could you say sorry one more time, Tom? I don't think he heard the first three times. Also, I just like the way it rolls off your tongue.

TOM

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

GARY

I'm glad. But why did you have to drag me in here to tell me? And why is there a small man handcuffed to the toilet?

TOM

That's a woman. Her name is Dandelion.

DANDELION

Greetings!

TOM

I don't get it either. I called you in because I wanted to do something for you. To make it up. You were the first one to use the toilets, and I think this whole thing might have been a mistake.

GARY

That's the first logical thing I've heard you say.

GIL

Hear hear!

TOM

Thanks for the support, Gil.

GIL

That's what I'm here for.

TOM

I wanted to call you in because I've decided we should disband the synchronomacitation project.

GIL

You what?

TOM

Sorry I didn't talk to you about this before, Gil. I've just been thinking a lot the past few days. This whole thing was a mistake. There is a person who has willingly handcuffed themselves to the toilet.

DANDELION

Come on in, the waters fine.

GARY

Well, that's very nice of you Tom-

GIL

You're not doing shit, alright. What do you think Robert will say when we tell him the only reason we still work here isn't working?

TOM

Robert's too busy golfing to notice anything around here, and Janice hates these things. Do you really think it matters?

GARY

Well, as I was saying-

GIL

Yes, I do, Tom. I think keeping my job matters.

DANDELION

Foolish plebs!

TOM

You hate it here more than I do, I thought you'd be happy.

GIL

Well, you thought wrong. What a surprise.

TOM

I really thought you'd have my back on this one.

DANDELION

You are alone in this world, Tom.

GARY

If I could just-

GIL

You are not going to ruin my life because of your god damned liberal arts, nonsense conscience.

TOM

And you aren't going to ruin mine because you're too old to care about anything anymore.

GARY

All of you, shut up! Now, as I was saying before you two pre-teens had it out, was that I don't think you should stop this project.

TOM

That's what I thought-

GARY

I said shut up. I know that I wasn't on board at first. I think we all said some pretty mean things during our first meeting. But, I like them now. I think most people do. It's nice, I get to come into work and drink my coffee while I'm pooping. Do you know how much time that saves? I get to eat lunch while I go, catch up with a co-worker. It's like the water cooler, but better because you get to poop in it without getting yelled at. I hardly want to leave this place at the end of the day.

TOM

Gary, that's great to hear, but this whole thing started as a joke, and it went too far.

GIL

You probably shouldn't advertise that, Tom.

GARY

It's your time to listen to me, now. I knew it was a joke, from the start. How could it not be? I've known Gil for far too long to think he is capable of such nincompoopery. I just don't care. It's like this whole office has become my throne.

TOM

You've lost me.

GARY

At home, when I poop, it's great. The highlight of my day. I get to read, eat, whatever. It's where I feel comfortable. And at first, I thought you were going to ruin pooping for me forever with these things, that I'd never feel safe, even in my own bathroom. But, now, I realize, that you've made everywhere feel like a toilet to me. You've given me a beautiful gift, and I'm not letting you take it away from me.

TOM

You really feel that way?

GARY

I really do.

GIL

That's great Gary. Now, can we shut up about this whole closing the project down business. It's making me nauseous. Then again, that could just be the stench.

TOM

Yeah, I guess. I didn't realize how much it meant to you Gary.

GARY

Well, now you do. But, there is something you could do to help me forgive you. Fully.

TOM

Anything. Just ask.

GARY

Gil, do you have a camera?

GIL

I have a phone.

GARY

That'll have to do.

TOM

I don't think I like where this is going.

GARY

Well, Tom. Since you caused me a lot of grief at the beginning of this charade, I'm going to need you to humiliate yourself, just a little bit.

TOM

I think I like where this is going.

GARY

See, this whole project has made everyone in the office hate you. Well, the project and your personality. So, I'd like to have some memento, something to pass around the next time I poop near some friends.

TOM

Remember when I said I'd do anything to make this up to you. Anything is such a strange word.

GARY

No backing out now.

GIL

He's right. Do whatever the man asks or live with shame the rest of your life.

GARY

This is shaping up to be a pretty good day.

TOM

Just tell me what you want. Enough with the games.

GARY

Kiss the toilet.

TOM

Oh, God. Where?

GARY

Anywhere.

GIL

Just make sure we can see your face. You know, for the camera.

GARY

You always had such an eye for detail, Gil.

TOM

And If I do this, we're even. You're not going to be mad anymore?

GARY

I'll be in hog heaven.

TOM

Alright. Let's just get it over with.

TOM approaches the toilet, slowly. He points at a spot ripe for kissing and looks back to see if it meets GARY's approval. GARY nods and giggles. GIL circles around TOM and fidgets with the angle, before giving TOM a thumbs up. TOM closes his eyes and smooches the side of the toilet. DANDELION is excitedly watching the whole time.

DANDELION

Tom, that was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

TOM

Why are you here?

DANDELION

Why are any of us?

TOM

You happy, Gary?

GARY

As can be. Gil, could you send me that in an email?

GIL

Doing it right now.

TOM

I can't believe you, Gil.

GIL

Oh, darn. My finger slipped. I accidentally sent it out on the company listserv.

GARY

But, Gil, everyone in the company will get that picture now.

GIL

I know. What a strange mistake.

GARY

How will I ever forgive you?

TOM

This isn't over, Gil.

GARY

Well, gentleman, have a nice day.

GARY exits

TOM

Just great. The whole company hates me, I just kissed a toilet, and there is still a woman handcuffed to our toilet.

DANDELION

Could you guys bring me in some food? I haven't eaten in a while.

TOM

No, we cannot bring you food.

DANDELION

What about you, Gil? Can I have some food.

GIL

No.

DANDELION

Okay. Then, I think I'm going to go.

TOM

You can't until you poop out the key, remember?

DANDELION

Yeah, that was lie. I got these handcuffs at the dollar store. There's no key.

DANDELION snaps the handcuffs off of the toilet.

TOM

Then why were you here!

DANDELION

Why are any of us, Tom? (she approaches him and strokes his face). And, my girlfriend was out of town. Seemed like a good way to kill a few days.

TOM

Out.

DANDELION

Alright. Goodbye, Tom. Goodbye, Gil.

She exits. TOM starts to stare down GIL. GIL attempts to appear defiant, but gradually breaks into a face wracked with guilt. He tries to justify himself.

GIL

Consider this repayment for getting me into this whole mess.

TOM

Oh, you'll be repaid.

Lights fade. End of scene.

SCENE NINE

JANICE is alone in the conference room staring at the toilet. The device acts as a magnet for everything in the room, attracting gazes and disgust. MARCIA enters and is visibly dismayed, interrupting JANICE's stupor.

MARCIA

I told you that I'd be back.

JANICE

Hi. I'm Janice. Nice to meet you.

MARCIA

What are you doing here?

JANICE

Working. I tend to work when I'm at work.

MARCIA

It's just, I was expecting those men.

JANICE

Sorry to disappoint.

MARCIA

Where are my manners? I'm Marcia. So, you work here?

JANICE

I've kept my job since I told you thirty seconds ago, so yes.

MARCIA

No need to be rude.

JANICE

I'll get over it.

MARCIA

I don't see why you're being so hostile.

JANICE

Were you just coming in here to talk about the toilet and how wrong it is?

MARCIA

Yes.

JANICE

Do you get the hostility now?

MARCIA

Don't tell me you like this thing, this abomination.

JANICE

I helped approve this abomination.

MARCIA

How could you?

JANICE

All it took was a signature.

MARCIA

I mean morally.

JANICE

I attached my soul to the signature.

MARCIA

I just can't believe a woman would do something like this.

JANICE

Are you a woman of faith, Marcia?

MARCIA

Very much so.

JANICE

So you're telling me, that as a woman of faith, you don't believe something despite the concrete evidence standing in front of you?

MARCIA

I don't appreciate your tone.

JANICE

Some days, I don't either.

MARCIA

Then why are you being so disrespectful?

JANICE

Because I am tired and I am angry, not at anyone in particular, but still angry.

MARCIA

I think you're getting what you deserve.

JANICE

Thank you for the kind words.

There is a pause. The collective angers subside and the two women gradually look towards the toilet.

MARCIA

Do you use them?

JANICE

Yes. But only for the bathroom.

MARCIA

You know what I meant.

JANICE

I did.

MARCIA

What's it like?

JANICE

Pooping?

MARCIA

Fine. Nevermind.

MARCIA heads toward the exit. As she nears the door, JANICE relents her icy demeanor.

JANICE

It was weird at first, but you get used to it.

MARCIA

Really?

JANICE

Really.

MARCIA

But what if there are men around?

JANICE

What if there are?

MARCIA

Don't you feel violated?

JANICE

No. But I can't speak for everyone. I don't feel that way, I couldn't blame a woman if she did.

MARCIA

I envy you sometimes.

JANICE

We just met.

MARCIA

I mean, women like you.

JANICE

There aren't any women like me.

MARCIA

I know you think that, and that's what I envy. I wish I could do that.

JANICE

Why don't you?

MARCIA

I know you think it's simple, but I can't undo my entire life.

JANICE

So, what then? You just go around trying to shut everything that doesn't fit into your worldview down? That's no way to live.

MARCIA

Well, it's the only way I know.

JANICE

And now I envy you.

MARCIA

Don't patronize me.

JANICE

I don't... believe in things. And you do. The things you think might be fucked up, but you still believe. I envy that. Truly.

MARCIA

It's not perfect, you know.

JANICE

Nothing is. Do you have a daughter?

MARCIA

One.

JANICE

She's going to grow up to be a woman like me.

MARCIA

I can only hope.

JANICE

Do you want to try it? The toilet?

MARCIA

Absolutely not.

JANICE

I can leave.

MARCIA

I can't.

JANICE

Nobodies stopping you, for once.

MARCIA

I shouldn't.

JANICE

I'm going to leave, whatever happens, only you will know.

JANICE slowly exits the conference room. The door shuts softly. MARCIA stares at the toilet, takes a deep breath and the lights fade

SCENE TWELVE

Lights up on TOM and GIL. They are both sitting in the conference room.

TOM

Hey, Gil.

GIL

Yeah.

TOM

What ya thinking about?

GIL

My annoying coworker who asks inane questions.

TOM

If I didn't know better, I would take that as an insult.

GIL

If you knew better, you definitely would.

TOM

I want you to know there's no hard feelings about the picture thing.

GIL

And there shouldn't be.

TOM

It's actually helped boost office morale. Everyone around here seems happy, except you.

GIL

And that's none of your business.

TOM

How come you never open up?

GIL

That's a loaded question.

TOM

I'm not trying to make it complicated, I just want to know.

GIL

Well, your question isn't true. I open up, just not here.

TOM

Well, why not?

GIL

Because jobs aren't supposed to be fun.

TOM

How can this not be fun? Have you been here the last few months?

GIL

Two months won't undo twenty years.

TOM

Next you're going to tell me you don't consider me a friend.

GIL

And next you're going to tell me that you're surprised by this.

TOM

I don't get you.

GIL

What's to get?

TOM

Well, we put in these wonderful fixtures into the new office and everyone is happy. Except you. I don't get that. It's like there's happiness residue on all the toilet seats, and yet you've missed out. You should try kissing one.

GIL

I would hardly qualify it as missing out.

TOM

No, seriously, man. I'm starting to think you have a problem. Like, mentally.

GIL

I usually hesitate to take psychiatric advice from twenty year olds.

TOM

I'm twenty-three.

GIL

The fact that you think that's significant really illustrates my point.

TOM

Fair enough. I just don't understand how you don't feel liberated by all this.

GIL

I feel plenty liberated.

TOM

No, you don't.

GIL

I don't think how I feel personally is up to your judgment.

TOM

Gil, all due respect, but you have a stick up your ass. And I'm just wondering why you haven't taken it out and flushed it down the toilet.

GIL

Why the sudden hostility, kid?

TOM

Because I worry about you. You're the only one left in the office who hasn't taken to this whole toilet thing, and yet, you're one of the people who thought of it. The whole thing just seems shitty, if you ask me.

GIL

Are you forgetting how we got here? This whole idea was designed so I could pretend to shit in front of the boss man. This was never something I seriously considered. But, now, I've got to keep going to keep my job.

TOM

You really don't believe in what we're doing?

GIL

Of course I don't.

TOM

Then, how the fuck do you show up every day?

GIL

I usually take the bus.

TOM

Don't be a smartass, it doesn't suit you.

GIL

I show up everyday for the paycheck.

TOM

And here I thought it was for our thrilling conversations.

GIL

I don't think you know what "thrilling" means.

TOM

I'm serious, Gil. I thought you were better than that.

GIL

Better than what? Everyone else here, because if you think I'm the only one in it for the money, you are sorely mistaken.

TOM

Gil, you can't look at me with a straight face and tell me that what we're doing here hasn't had a profound effect on the office.

GIL

What you're missing here is that I don't care what effect it's had. Now can we talk about something else?

TOM

Which parent didn't hug you when you were growing up?

GIL

Both.

TOM

That makes a lot of sense.

GIL

What is this really about? Clearly, you've got some deep-seated issues. And, for the love of God, don't turn deep-seated into a toilet pun.

TOM

Well, Gil. You're right. This is about more than your malaise. See, the thing is, I've never seen you use one of the toilets.

GIL

Are you asking if you can watch me?

TOM

No, I'm asking why the project manager has never taken advantage of the project.

GIL

I hardly think this is relevant.

TOM

Gil. Have you or have you not used the toilets?

GIL

That's a stupid question.

TOM

I'm not looking for a smart answer.

GIL

Why do you even care?

TOM

Gil, just answer the fucking question.

GIL

I have not.

TOM

I knew it!

GIL

But that doesn't mean anything.

TOM

Gil, I took the liberty of putting some laxatives in your lunch today.

GIL

WHAT?

TOM

It's something that needed to happen, Gil. Also, I'm totally not over the picture thing. Not one bit.

GIL

You didn't even know that I've never used them until now.

TOM

I had a hunch, Gil. I took a risk, it paid off.

GIL stands up and slowly backs away from TOM.

GIL

You are a psychopath.

TOM

I know how you feel, Gil. I've been in your position before. Well, I was sitting, but close enough.

GIL

Oh, really. You've been poisoned by a coworker.

TOM stands and starts to console GIL.

TOM

Just cyber-bullied. And poison is a strong word, and it's a weak laxative. I just figured you needed a little incentive.

GIL

Get away from me.

TOM slowly embraces GIL and starts shushing him. The creepier the better.

TOM

Shh. Calm down Gil. It'll be fine. Just relax.

GIL

I am going to get you fired.

TOM

All this tension you're feeling, that's normal. It's the body telling you it's time to go.

GIL

Dear God, you're insane.

TOM

Gil, I want you to look at the toilet. Doesn't it look inviting? Strip away your inhibitions and clothing and use it.

GIL

Oh, God. It's happening. How much laxative did you use?

TOM

Enough.

GIL

I hate you.

TOM

Calm down, Gil. And stop using such strong language.

GIL

It's for a weak man.

TOM

I'm going to leave, and I'll be locking the door. I left you some triple ply toilet paper, it's top shelf. There's some hand sanitizer on the table and your favorite magazine is sitting on the seat. It's ready, Gil, are you?

GIL

Just leave.

TOM

I'll be back in five minutes, we'll talk this all out then.

GIL

Get out and never come back.

TOM

Whatever you say. This is all for the best, Gil, I want you to know that. I'm doing this because I care about you.

GIL

Out!

TOM exits stage left and shuts the door and a lock sound is heard. GIL starts wandering around the room like a mad man, looking for any means of escape. After he exhausts all means of escape, he reluctantly gathers all the materials necessary for his journey, he sits down. The lights go out and a very disturbing, yet oddly humorous soundtrack plays. The lights come back up and GIL's hair is messed up, he is out of breath, fully clothed and he is staring at the toilet. TOM re-enters. GIL is in a daze.

TOM

Well, how was it?

GIL

Wonderful.

TOM

You still mad at me?

GIL

I will be in a few minutes. But not right now.

TOM

I just hope you understand why this had to happen now.

GIL

I don't understand anything anymore.

TOM

You're really waxing poetic here. I must have mixed some other things in with the laxative.

GIL

How come nobody told me?

TOM

Because we couldn't. Would you have believed us? This is one of those things that you have to do. You can't be told.

GIL

Why aren't these everywhere?

TOM

The people aren't ready.

GIL

When I was using it, it was more than just poop coming out. It was, like, a lifetime of shame. A lifetime of worrying about what others thought.

TOM

And how do you feel now?

GIL

Better. Freer. Lighter.

TOM

I knew this would happen.

GIL

I still hate you, for the record.

TOM

I knew that would happen.

GIL

But, man, I was wrong.

TOM

I tell you what, I'll let you name the toilet. Would that make you feel better?

GIL

No foolin'?

TOM

No foolin'.

GIL

How about Deuce X Machine?

TOM

Sounds perfect. Let's write it on the board. Let the whole world see.

GIL writes *deuse ex machine* on the board. He stands back and admires his work.

GIL

It is perfect. I just have this wonderful feeling that everything is going to be alright. Almost like we have angels watching over us.

Lights fade.
END OF PLAY

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